

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2231

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PP, AS, PFOR, ABLD, AFSP

SUBJECT: OPENING OF PORT MORESBY CONGEN

1. SUBJECT THIS MESSAGE HAS BEEN OF LONG CONCERN TO EMBASSY CANBERRA. LATTER HAS ATTEMPTED INDUCE DEPARTMENT TAKE EARLY MEASURES OBTAIN OFFICE AND RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES IN CROWDED, COSTLY AND RELATIVELY UNDEVELOPED PORT MORESBY. STRINGENT FINANCES APPARENTLY HAVE PRECLUDED INSPECTORS AND FBO REPRESENTATIVES, AS WELL AS ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF FROM CANBERRA, MAKING ON-SIGHT ASSESSMENTS THERE AS OFTEN SUGGESTED.

2. WITH ESTABLISHMENT NEW CONGEN PORT MORESBY NOW PROBABLE WITHIN NEXT FEW MONTHS, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT FIRST OFFICER TO BE SENT THERE HAVE USEFUL BACKGROUND IN ADMINISTRATION (PARTICULARLY LEASING, WAGE SCALES AND GENERAL PROCUREMENT).

3. ALTHOUGH THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS IN CANBERRA WOULD ENJOY THE TRAVEL AND EXPERIENCE TO BE GAINED FROM ESTABLISHING A POST IN PORT MORESBY, THEIR CURRENT WORKLOAD AND LOCAL LABOR SHORTAGES WILL MAKE SUCH AN UNDERTAKING DIFFICULT AND UNDESIRABLE FOR AN INDEFINITE TIME. AMONG THE VARIED AND SIGNIFICANT ADMINISTRATIVE PROJECTS CURRENTLY TO THE FORE ARE: SALE OF KINGSTON COMPOUND; PURCHASE AND RENOVATION OF TWO RESIDENCES (ONE FOR DCM, OTHER FOR POLITICAL COUNSELOR); REMODELING OF MUCH OF CHANCERY; RENOVATION OF 21 ARKANA FOR USE AS A CHANCERY ANNEX; CONSTRUCTION OF A LARGE AND WELL LANDSCAPED MOTOR POOL, AND EXTENSION

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OF THE VILLA TO PROVIDE MORE ADEQUATE STORAGE FACILITIES. THESE

UNDERTAKINGS ARE ALREADY TAXING A LEAN ADMINISTRATIVE
COMPLEMENT AND WILL BECOME MORE ONEROUS AS WORK THERON DEVELOPS.

4. THE EMBASSY ALSO BELIEVES IT WILL BE MORE ECONOMICAL FOR
THE DEPARTMENT TO STATION AN ADMIN OFFICER AT THE OUTSET IN
PORT MORESBY THAN TO MEET THE COSTLY PER DIEM AND TRAVEL EXPENSES
ASSOCIATED WITH HOUSEKEEPING DETAILS FROM CANBERRA. THE DEPARTMENT'S
VIEWS ON THE RECOMMENDATION MADE IN THIS CABLE WILL BE APPRECIATED.
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